NORTHERN TRIBUNE.

SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 1883.

THE SKEIN WE WIND.

If you and I, to-day,
Should stop and lay
Our life-work down, and let our hands fall where they will—
Fall down to lie quite still—
And if some other hand should come and stoop to find
The threads we carried so that it could wind,
Beginning where we stopped; if it should come to keep
Our life-work going; seek
To carry on the good design
Distinctly made yours, or mine,
What would it find?
Some work we must be doing, true or false;
Some threads we wind; some purpose so exalts
Itself that we look up to, or down,
As to a crown
To bow before, and we weave threads
Of different lengths and thickness—some mere shreds—
And wind them round
Till all the skein of life is bound,
Sometimes forgetting at the task
To ask
The value of the threads, or choose
Strong stuff to use.
No hand but winds some thread;
It can not stand quite still, till it is dead,
But when it spins and winds a little skein,
God made each hand for work—not toil-stain
Is required, but every hand
Spins, though but ropes of sand.
If Love should come,
Stooping above when we are done,
To find bright threads
That we have held, that it may spin them longer—find but shreds
That break when touched, how cold,
Sad, shivering, portionless, the hands will hold
The broken strands and know
Fresh cause for woe.

—*George Klingle.*

A BICYCLE STORY.

Fearful Ride Down a Mountain.

Our mine, the Spondulix, of Colorado, was the highest on the range. It was 2,670 feet above Silver Brick Station, and nine miles distant from the village. From the works up to the mines there was a broad, hard, smooth road, used for carting ore down from the mines and hauling supplies up. The average grade down the mountain was three hundred feet to the mile; in some places it was considerably steeper, and at intervals almost level. The road was made partly on the bare rock, and wound up a narrow gulch; presently it climbed outside the chasm, and here at several places the road-bed had been blasted out of the solid rock, or cut into the perpendicular side of the mountain; but everywhere the road was almost as smooth and hard as a floor. Knowing that a loose stone might cost the lives of both teamster and team, where sometimes the brakes would not entirely check the descent of an ore-wagon, until one of the nearly-level places had been reached, the teamsters were careful to keep the surface of the road clean and smooth.

By constant practice I managed at last to ride my 52-inch "University" roadster up the whole slope to the Spondulix, of course resting at levels, but my chief delight was the coasting down again; it required skill, a good deal of nerve, and a firm grasp of the brake.

One evening an accident occurred to one of those engaged at the mine. I instantly got out my bicycle, explaining that I could go swifter than a horse down the slope. In a few minutes I had on my riding-suit and was off.

The night was clear and crisp; the full moon, except in a few curves, shone directly into the gulch, lighting up the road. Leaning well back, with my legs over the handles, and a firm finger on the brake, I allowed the wheel to glide down the first long slope at a speed which I never dared to venture before. Finding the motion safe, I allowed the machine to run faster, and still faster. Over the first level I shot like an arrow. Down the next slope I seemed to glide on the rushing wind. Then I turned a curve and ran into the shadow of the mountain upon the next level. Knowing every inch of the road however, I did not slacken speed except slightly.

As I flew over the top of the next slope, a steep plunge of nearly half a mile, another curve completely shut out the moon, making the road almost as dark as a pocket. Here I put down the brake hard, and checked my speed materially. Still I knew the road so well that I had no fear. But just as I was upon the steepest plunge of the slope——

Clink!

Something flew from the machine like a bullet. Instantly the wheel darted forward like the rush of a frightened bird, while the brake lever came home to the steering-bar under my finger.

The brake had broken short off in the elbow!

There was nothing to check the machine, which was running away with me, with over five miles of mountain grade before me, and the chance of meeting a team any moment in the dark. I might have leaped backward off the machine at the instant of the break, but five seconds afterwards it was too late. To attempt a dismount would be certain death. There was nothing to do but stick to the saddle and take my chances.

Within thirty seconds the machine had acquired a velocity never before experienced by mortal rider. The sensation was like that of falling through the air. The rush of the atmosphere past me was like a fearful gale. The wheel no longer felt the inequalities of the road. It seemed to glide smoothly over a perfect plane. I felt no sense of shocks from pebbles, or hollows, or protuberances. In fact, I believe that there were many places, especially when I shot over the brow of a steeper incline, where the whole machine took a flying hop, or rather a long, skimming glide through the air, without touching the road.

It was lucky that I had practiced so much coasting down this very road, and that I knew every inch of it so thoroughly. Going at that amazing speed, leaning far back in the saddle, the steering was somewhat novel and peculiar. The speed gave the wheel such an obstinate disposition to keep on a straight line that I could not have turned a short curve if I had tried. A very little too much turning of the steering-bar would have wrenched it instantly from my hands, and smashed the wheels to fragments. But my practice had taught me the necessity of making my curves long and easy when coasting at great speed; and by instinct my grasp upon the steering-bar was that of desperation, both my arms being kept as firm, yet flexible, as spring steel.

When the accident happened, I was just entering a dark curve in the shadow of the mountain. The wall on my right appeared a dark, almost invisible brown, while the chasm on my left was of an inky blackness. As I rounded the hollow of the curve, I could see the moonlight shining far ahead on the point of the elbow which I must turn where the road was channeled into the wall. As I approached it I had the sense and nerve to run on the outer side of the road, close to the edge of the canyon, thus giving myself as broad a turn as possible. I found by the track of the wheel afterwards that at the sharpest turn I had actually ridden within three inches of the extreme edge for several rods, where, if I had been going at a less fearful speed, the wheel would certainly have slipped over the edge, and carried me down a fall of one thousand feet.

Safely past this, the worst point, the remaining curves were easy. Thus far there had been no time to think. My actions were more instinctive than reasoning. My mind was a wild, confused whirl of sensations and fears.

But now, as I shot down the last steep incline, suddenly I experienced a terrible mental shock. It was caused by hearing the tinkle of a bell far below, and seeing the spark of a lantern such as the mine teamsters carry in front of their wagons. There was a team, perhaps a train of teams, coming up the road! In a few seconds I should be upon them. The shock made me think, and that clearly. If the teamster was walking beside this team, he would be on the inside, next to the mountain wall, and the team would be in the middle of the road. If he was riding, the team would be kept near the mountain wall, and a safe distance from the outer edge of the track. Either way my best chance was to pass on the outside. As I approached, therefore, I ran close to the outside edge of the track, and flew by in safety, hearing the teamster shout as I did so. Here it was lucky that I was going at such great speed, for the teamster saw the red light of my lantern when I was nearly a mile distant, and, recognizing it, he started his team toward the outer edge of the road, so as to give me the safest passage on the inside; but I was upon and past him before the team could be driven over, otherwise I should have surely ran into them.

And now the wheel ran along the level at the bottom of the mountain; still my frightful velocity did not perceptibly diminish. I ran out past the works, and into and along the village street. Luckily the street was covered thinly with sand—not enough to make it bad riding, but sufficient to gradually stop a coasting wheel. My speed slackened perceptibly. Still I ran nearly through the village, and then managed to turn a broad corner and run up the slope of a side street, which finally checked my speed so that I ventured to drop my feet cautiously and take the pedals, after touching them as they came up for a number of revolutions, to help to check the machine.

And so I finally stopped and leaped to the ground exactly in front of Dr. Cameron's house.

On mounting at the mine-house I had looked at my watch after a habit I had; and now, from the same habit, I looked at it again. I was not astonished to find that I had made the nine miles from the mine to the doctor's in a few seconds less than thirteen minutes. Allowing six and a quarter for the first two miles before the brake gave way, and I must have made the last seven miles in less than six and three-quarter minutes. I firmly believe that I covered seven miles in less than six and a half minutes, incredible as such speed seems.—*Chicago Tribune.*

—The sea serpent is eclipsed. Captain Augustus G. Hall, of the schooner Annie L. Hall, reports that during a recent cruise along the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, he discovered an immense trunk turtle, which at first was supposed to be a vessel bottom up. The schooner passed within twenty-five feet of the monster, affording an opportunity to obtain a good view, and the dimensions were estimated to be at least forty feet in length, thirty feet in width, thirty feet from apex of the back to bottom of the under shell; the flippers were not less than twenty feet in length.—*Indianapolis Journal.*

—This is a recent ordinance in the town of Bellary, India: "Resolved, that as the loose monkeys in the town have become exceedingly troublesome, by attacking women and children carrying eatables, and overturning the tiles of the roofs of the houses in the town, these animals be caught and sent out into the jungles, and that arrangements be made that monkeys may not receive any injury while being seized."

Facts About the Corn Crop.

The Commissioner of Agriculture notes that the average price for the crop of the entire country from 1871 to 1881, inclusive, has been forty-three cents. In the last five years of this period it failed to reach forty cents, except in 1881, when it was sixty-three cents. It is above the average now, from the gradually increasing use of corn in meat-making, but mainly from its comparative scarcity, the last crop averaging only twenty-four bushels per acre, or four bushels less than the census crop of 1879. That crop furnished a supply of thirty-five bushels per capita; the crop of last year only thirty bushels per head, counting present population at 54,000,000.

The intelligent observer, at all conversant with the facts of farm economy, cannot fail to see that the surplus, held over to augment the following year's supply, must always be small, say five or six per cent. usually, and scarcely exceeding ten in years of exceptional abundance. In three-fourths of all corn-producing counties there is next to absolute exhaustion of corn cribs every year; in a few, in the great corn sections, there is sometimes a liberal proportion held over. One hundred and fifty million bushels in all the States would be an extraordinary surplus in any season. The report refers to an error that should be guarded against—the thoughtless assumption of an equal rate of consumption throughout the year, summer as well as winter. No farmer, intelligent or otherwise, would make this blunder, which is broached, though probably not accepted to any appreciable extent, in commercial quarters. It is evident that the consumption in December in the feeding States, where three-fourths of the corn is grown and two-thirds of it consumed, is five times—in some of them ten times—as much as in June. And yet there are those who thoughtlessly assume that the consumption, if an average of 100,000,000 bushels per month, must necessarily be in equal quantity each month.

There is a chance for misconception of the actual requirements of consumption from the rapid increase of the past twelve years, which is sufficiently large, but much of it is more apparent than real. The year 1869 was one of low production of corn, and the census of 1880 was very incomplete in the South, making the record of 1870 positively less than that of 1860. This was deceptive, misleading the press, which proclaimed a decline in corn culture, whereas there was an increase in acreage. The census made 760,944,549 bushels a figure ten per cent. too low for 1869, for that season, and thirty-three per cent. less than a good season would have made. The Department of Agriculture made 874,320,000 bushels for the same year and claims to have fairly represented the real status of the crop. The area was sufficient for a crop of 1,000,000,000, and in 1870 a product of nearly 1,100,000,000 was obtained.

The increase in area has been gradual, and no such boom has occurred as the unthinking and misinformed observer is disposed to believe. Nor has the Department of Agriculture made very low estimates except in 1878 and 1879, the causes of which are obvious. Reviewing the production of five years for 1877 and 1881, inclusive, in the light of census and department work combined, the average product, exclusive of an average of about 82,500,000 bushels exported, would admit of a consumption for all purposes of nearly 1,400,000,000 bushels. For ten years the consumption has averaged about 1,275,000,000 bushels, the exportation nearly 65,000,000 bushels.

The increase has been gradual and comparatively uniform. The competition of one crop with another and the practical difficulty of much annual change in the aggregate area of all crops, except by the steady increase of farms and farmers, forbid the spasmodic and extreme enlargement of the area of any crop. Every accurate enumeration, State or National, fortifies this position and exposes the absurdities so often set afloat in this era of speculation. The annual variation in average yield per acre in the United States shows how comparatively uniform in production is this national crop, and yet how short unfavorable seasons may occasionally make it, from drouth and other causes, as in 1881 and 1874.—*Western Rural.*

A Delighted Apple-Woman.

Of ex-Mayor Green, of Boston, the *Gazette* of that city relates the following story: "A poor old apple woman formerly had a stand in front of the United States Court-house, at the corner of Temple Place and Tremont Street. Some time ago she was ordered away, and she moved her stand to one locality after another, but neither her customers nor her profits followed her. The ex-Mayor learned of her misfortune, and comforted her with the assurance that he would see to it that she got a good location again if she would be patient. He accordingly addressed a personal letter to the Secretary of the Treasury in Washington, telling that official of the apple woman's misfortune, adding that she was the mother of fourteen rosy-faced children. The ex-Mayor forwarded the endorsement of Assistant United States Treasurer Kennard, District Attorney Sanger, and United States Marshal Banks, and an application was promptly forwarded to Washington requesting that the apple woman be allowed to resume her old stand. A prompt response was received, and directions were sent to the proper official here to allow the apple woman to occupy her old place. The directions were promptly obeyed and the apple woman is happy."